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ABSTRACT

Pressure from the mass media, parents, and peers often causes young girls to concentrate on their most external aspects at a time when the inner demand for self definition is equally important. In the struggle to receive attention from boys, many girls suppress their identities, fearful that if they allowed their true selves to emerge they would not be attractive as women. Physical activities are often abandoned and girls fail to develop strength and pride in their bodies. Grades slide as they decide to settle for being clerical workers or teachers instead of scientists or engineers. Society seems to declare motherhood as the ultimate goal for a girl, regardless of her abilities or interests, yet often that is completed by the time a woman is 40. Her children are grown, the external beauty is faded, and little else is left for her. Girls need to be aware of all that the future may hold; they need to prepare themselves in terms of their own goals, abilities and preferred life styles. This document concludes with two sections that suggest discussions and other activities parents can utilize in helping their daughters develop their own individual talents, independence, and self confidence. (Author/DS)

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Parenting Daughters

by Cathaleen Fisley & Dolores Wolf
Illustrated by Vicki Wayman

Choices & Careers
Free To Choose

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About The Author

Cathaleen Finley is an associate professor in the Department of Family Development at University of Wisconsin—Extension. Delores Wolf, a Chippewa, was born and raised on the Bad Rivers Chippewa Reservation in Wisconsin. She was born in 1931 and is the mother of four daughters. Two of her daughters are LPN's, one is a Native American counselor at Northland College and the youngest is attending Haskell Junior Indian College. Delores returned to school after her children were grown and is now a senior at Northland College. She has been on the dean's honors list for the past two years. She began her college work with sociology as a major. She plans to be certified as a secondary teacher in social science with an emphasis on sociology and Native American studies. Vicki Wayman, a member of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewas, did the illustrations for the unit.

About The Program

"Parenting Daughters" has been developed as part of the project Choices & Careers, Free to Choose, a career development project for tribal girls. The project was developed with the assistance of tribal women in Wisconsin and was funded with special needs funds from Extension Service-USDA.

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Parenting Daughters

How We Look-How We Feel

Have you ever thought about the idea that women are valued for how they look and men are valued for what they do? How different it is in the bird kingdom where males are the ones with the bright plumage and fancy feathers. One report tells of a girl who had three operations and spent six months in the hospital to have her legs shortened six inches so, as she said, "I can at least have happiness, marriage, and children."

Many women and young girls are victims of that image "out there" of how a woman is suppose to look. While fashions change from time to time, women often attempt to make themselves into the current fashionable image. While girls may be comfortable in jeans and tops today, think of how uncomfortable they could be teetering on six-inch platform shoes. Some of you may remember the horrors of the "Merry Widow" and think of women who used to lace themselves in corsets. Or do you ever wonder how you used to go barelegged in below zero weather?

A girl's self-image and body image are crucial parts of her self-concept. Both the mass media and religion have influenced how we feel about our bodies. Bodies have either been seen as something shameful to be covered or something short of beauty that needs changing.

Girls tend to worry about freckles, or a forehead that is too high,

a body that is too short or too tall, one tooth that is crooked, wearing glasses, a nose that is too small or too large, breasts that are too big or too small, stomaches that are too fat, or legs that are too boney. Many young girls have inferiority complexes or feel inadequate about their bodies. They need help in understanding that there is beauty in being tall, or in having freckles, and that each person is an individual, that having a crooked tooth is what makes a person an individual and that being an individual is what gives one an identity all her own. Think of the sadness of the girl with poor eyesight who refuses to wear glasses when a boy is around.

Girls need help in understanding that all the wishing in the world will not make the short tall, the fair dark, or the large boned dainty. They need help in accepting the realities of their own body. How can the teenager know for sure who she is when her body grows inches in a year and presents her with new and puzzling impulses. Sometimes pressures cause girls to concentrate on their most external aspects, at a time when the inner demand for self-definition is equally important. Although we do see a greater casualness in dress today in teenagers, some of this comes from a revolution against what used to be, and the similarity of dress tells us that outside forces still tell one how to dress.

With the influence of mass media there always seems something for girls to measure up to—whether it is longer eyelashes, longer hair, or slimmer waists. Family, friends, TV, movies—all tell girls to fulfill the current popular image. Girls receive little encourage-

ment to love their bodies as they are. But remember that men, not women, control the mass media.

Frequently women are judged in terms of their appearance, particularly their youthfulness. This is one reason why girls have a difficult time growing up and women have a difficult time growing old gracefully. Consider the difference of this idea and the value most tribes place on aging and the elderly.

Athletics

The idea that girls should be "delicate beings" has been reinforced by athletic programs or the lack of such programs for girls in school. Despite this, some women are stronger than men and some men are stronger than women. There may be a greater difference within the sexes than between the sexes. Girls should have a chance to learn swimming, bowling, and other athletic activities that they can easily continue to participate in as adults. Also, if given a chance to play games such as baseball and basketball, they could enjoy more of the spectator interest in watching professional sports. Thus they would have something else to share with men.

With the coming of Title IX, a federal regulation which says that there will be no sex discrimination in athletic or physical education programs receiving federal financial assistance, there should be more opportunities for girls in athletics.

However, all athletic activities needn't be part of the school system. What programs does your community have for young girls? Is the community building available to girls on the same basis as boys?

How much time do girls spend in physical activity compared to boys? It is with physical exercise that girls develop strong, healthy bodies, that they learn to know their bodies and to develop a sense of pride in them. Have you ever heard the saying "I am my body?" How many of the girls in your community spend time swimming, hiking, or biking? It is important for girls to realize that they can be physically active in individual sports, not just team sports.

In subtle ways, girls are warned not to compete with boys or they won't be like girls. Results of all this is that girls become cheerleaders for the boys' teams, thus fostering the notion that girls are not to be independent but rather supportive of males.

There are a number of reasons why girls don't exercise. Some believe that having muscles will scare boys away. Others hear adults make such comments as "Aren't you a little tomboy," or "Boys won't like you if you beat them at basketball." Or they may hear someone say to a boy,

"Ah, you throw just like a girl."

Picture a woman trying to work and to enter into equal and satisfactory relationships with other people when she feels weak because she has never needed to be strong, or when she drains her energy trying to change her face and figure to match some ideal norm set by someone else. That's what this is all about—to help young girls develop strength and pride in their bodies so that they will be able to enter the work world on an equal basis with men.

Women Are Housewives-Men Are Workers?

Think about these statements:

- Masculinity means success in the marketplace, while femininity means success in love relationships and maternity.
- The more successful a woman is in her work, the more afraid society is that a woman has lost her femininity and therefore must be a failure as a wife and mother. But the more successful a man is in his work, the more attractive he becomes as a spouse and father.
- Studying cannot make a woman happy. Women are out of place in positions of authority. Women's lives are dedicated to chores that are dull and easy. Girls are useful for housekeeping and reproduction.
- Men are punished for being failures while women are punished for being successes.

What do such statements reflect about the conflicts girls may struggle with if they strive to be independent women using their own special talents in a way best suited to themselves?

One research study showed that the most successful college women have a fear of success, believing that if they are successful in a career they cannot be successful in love. How often do women hear

that they should just work with men and not try to be in a leadership role. Despite changes in the status of women, many women and girls still believe that they should be docile and that attracting men is their main task in life.

Have you ever thought that no one, male or female, can derive total gratification simply from pleasing a member of the opposite sex. If a young girl really believes that and acts accordingly, she is doomed to disappointment in life.

Through the learning experiences provided for girls in the program it is hoped that they will see themselves with talents and abilities that can be used in the world of work.

Are There Myths?

There are a host of words used to describe the characteristics of men and women. In one study, mental health practitioners were asked to describe a mature well-adjusted man, a mature well-adjusted woman, and a mature well-adjusted person. The descriptions for the well-adjusted person and well-adjusted man coincided. However, the description of the well-adjusted woman showed her as more submissive, less independent, less adventuresome, less competitive, less aggressive, and more emotionable and excitable. These studies seem to suggest a number of factors that might keep women from feeling very good about themselves as achieving, motivated, and participating human beings.

Consider how people with similar ideas affect young girls as they are growing up, as they try to become independent young women. Studies have indicated that by the time a child is five, little boys have learned that crying is for girls only and that playing with dolls is sissy.

We need to remember that man are human beings and have weaknesses. If girls are raised to see men as very strong, it is a great shock for them when they marry and discover that man are not such sturdy oaks.

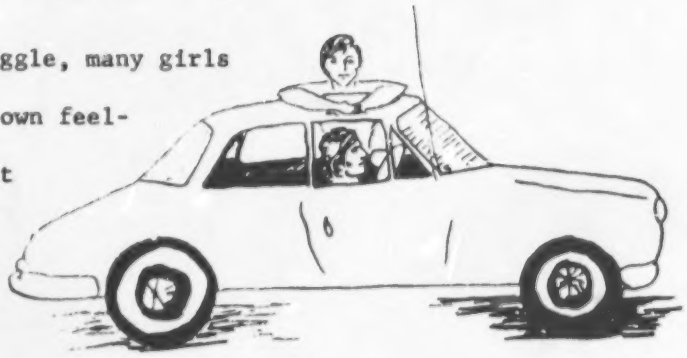
Despite how women may be viewed, think of how women have plowed in the cotton fields, carried baskets of wet wash from tub to line, carried water for miles, carried small children, pitched hay. Think of the things that Indian women have done in the past which show their great physical spirit and their great strength.

Wild ricing, raising and gathering and storing food, and caring for the sick all called for characteristics of strength.

A Time For Change

By the time a girl reaches junior high school, she discovers boys. She may also discover that boys do not like smart girls and that her future success depends on attracting, catching, and holding one of these boys. Her performance in school falls and continues to fall through grade twelve. If she still harbors ambitions to be a politician or a scientist, she may be systematically counseled that those are unrealistic goals and that she should become a school teacher or a clerical worker.

Adolescence should be a time for self-discovery. But for many teen-age girls it is the time for struggling to receive recognition



from boyfriends. In their struggle, many girls suppress their identity—their own feelings and interests—fearful that if they allow their identity to emerge, they will not be attractive as women. How many girls in your community have ever been told, "Don't do things better than a boy"?

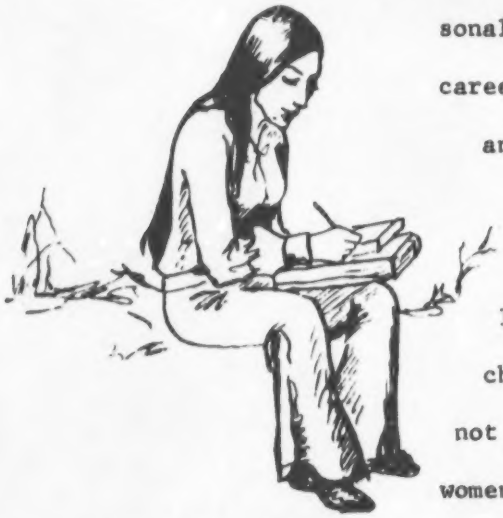
One of the things that can make growing up difficult is the contradiction that we thrust upon girls. In the early part of her life a girl is encouraged to compete with boys in the schoolroom, to develop her mind and her initiative. And then our curious system says she is to make sure that the male finds her attractive, and to find fulfillment in taking care of a child, a home, and a mate.

On the average, girls excel in all subjects in grade school, but in high school their grades decline. Boys begin to do better in high school and by college their grades are significantly better than girls. Also, boys become more independent as they mature, but the opposite is true for girls. One study indicated that as early as the ninth grade only 3 percent of the girls chose careers in science and engineering but 25 percent of the boyds did.

Teenagers feel pressures to conform. For some, the image of a woman is someone who is not very intelligent and somewhat emotional. Conforming to this image forces girls to do more poorly in academic

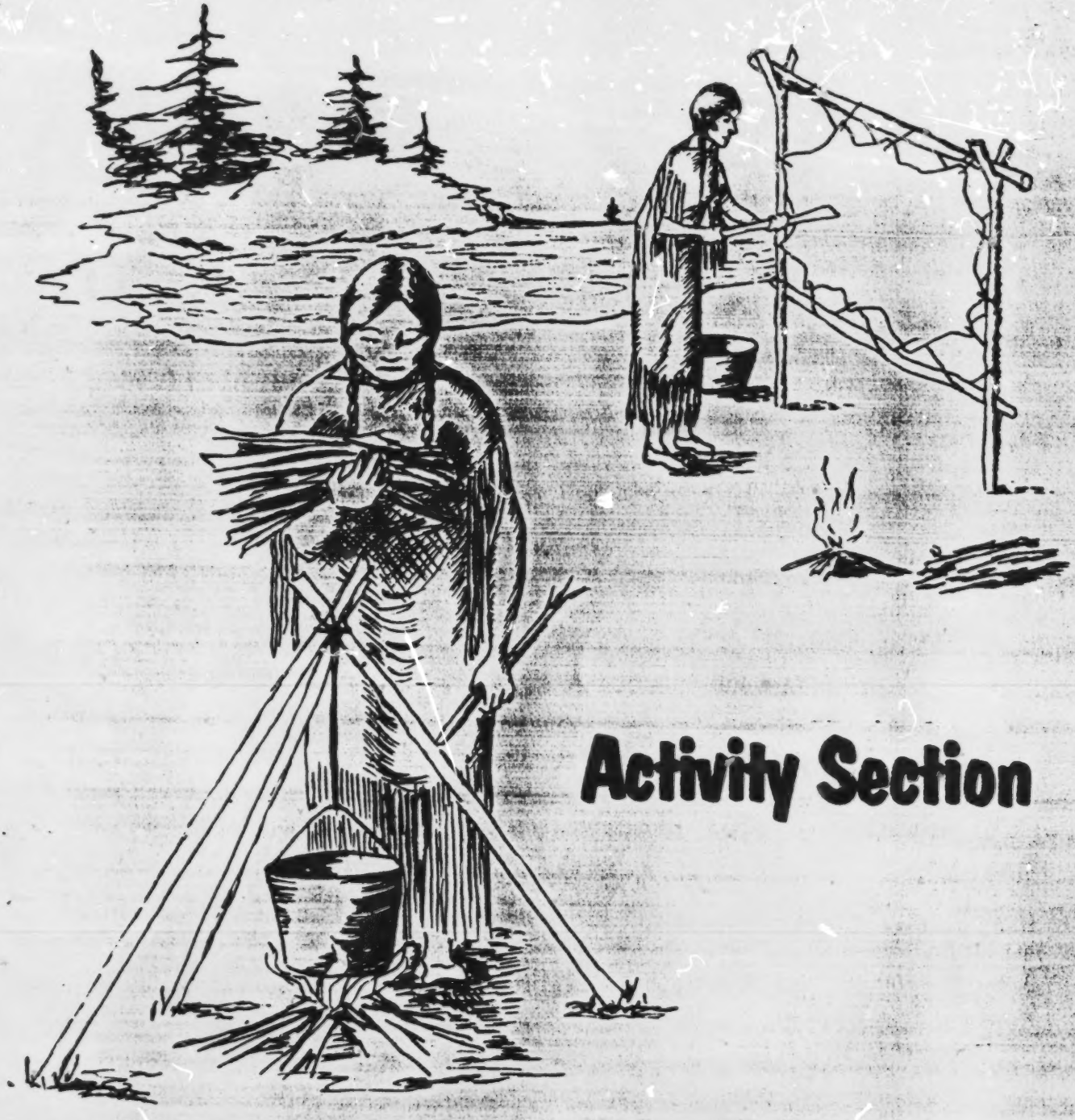
subjects than they had in previous years. It is important to keep in mind that these sex differences have to do with the teenagers' orientation to life rather than with their abilities.

From birth a woman, regardless of her aptitudes, skills, or personality, is expected to have as her chief career and source of fulfillment homemaking and child rearing. However, few persons would assert that all men are really meant to be enginners or lawyers. It is not that the job of homemaker and child rearer is not important. Rather, not all women are suited for it. Many women do not find this role sufficiently fulfilling, and for most women these activities will not occupy even half of their adult lives. Without adequate educational preparation, women may be disappointed as they try to fill half their lives.



What is important is to help girls see that achieving academically in junior and senior high school is important, that it is one of the keys to having a fulfilling and satisfying life as an adult.

We know that girls can expect to marry, but we need to make young men and women aware of the fact that life does not end at forty. Girls need to be made aware of those years and to do some conscious planning for what they are going to do in the years ahead. Consistently, studies have shown that girls do not plan, that they tend not to seek occupational information, and that they lack realistic educational-occupational plans. We need to help girls prepare themselves in terms of their own goals, abilities, and preferred life styles.



Activity Section

Building Pride

Mary is 12 years old. She is the shortest girl in her class. In fact she looks more like a nine year old. Her family asks her, "When are you going to grow?" She wonders if she is shrinking. How can adults help Mary understand that her state is normal and help her develop a respect for her body?

Tina is 16 and is six feet tall. She is self-conscious about towering over others, so she slouches a lot. How can adults help Tina develop a proudness for her tallness?

Poetry

RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS

Rivers flow, where do they go
they follow night into the dawn
and then flow on
strong winds blow, where do they go
they return to the mountain crest
to her silver caves of rest
the winds of the west

follow me to the mountain side
come to mother earth
lay your ear on soft red soil
and you will hear the secret of birth

grasses grow, where do they go
they follow light into the sun
and then grow on
fires glow, where do they go
they return to the mountain's feast
in ashen caves they are released
they burn to the east

follow me to the mountain side
come to mother earth
lay your ear on soft, red soil
and you will hear the secret of birth

all things flow, where do they go
they enter where the circles turn
all things return
people come, people go
all searching for a place to hide
they journey to the mountain side
she opens wide

follow me to the mountain side
come to mother earth
lay your ear on soft, red soil
and you will hear the secret of birth

YESTERDAY

Yesterday you murdered to take our land.
Today you've changed your tactics—
you smile, talk in big words, then
bring out a piece of paper.
That's really a change from yesterday,
isn't it?

NO DEAL!

The land is ours; we will not sign.
You ask us to put out a dollar sign
before the lives you've taken, the years of
starvation, sickness and oppression we've
been through?
Can your bill of sale promise us change?
You ask us to put a dollar sign on the
deaths of all...
on the deaths of all our people
and our way of life before you came?

NO THANKS!

We won't sell the only thing that we have left,
You may resort to yesterday's tactics;
yesterday we didn't know what you wanted.
Now we do, and we are ready—

NOW SMILE!

Things To Question

1. Look at some of the textbooks that your children use. Look for the following and discuss them with other parents.
   a. How many pictures of girls or women are there in the book?
   b. How many pictures of boys and men are there in the book?
   c. What are the girls and women doing compared with the boys and men?
   d. How are the people dressed?
   e. Are there any pictures of minority women?
   f. Do you think that the books portray real life?
2. What are the roles of men and women in your school system? Questions you might ask are:
   a. How many men are on the school board?
   b. How many women are on the school board?
   c. Is the principal a man or a woman?
   d. Is the superintendent a man or a woman?
   e. Are most grade school teachers men or women?
   f. Are most high school teachers men or women?
3. Visit some preschool and kindergarten rooms to see what toys are available. Do girls play with the same types of toys as boys?
4. If there is a college or university near you, visit the institution to find out how many women professors or instructors there are compared with men in these positions. Who is the president of the school?
5. Ask your children about the various heroines or great women that they have studied in school. Were there many?
6. Look at ads in a magazine. How are women pictured? What sex roles are implied by the ads?

7. Watch some television programs.

   What kinds of jobs do women have in soap operas?

   How many women have careers?

   What type of careers do women have?

   How many are wife-mothers?

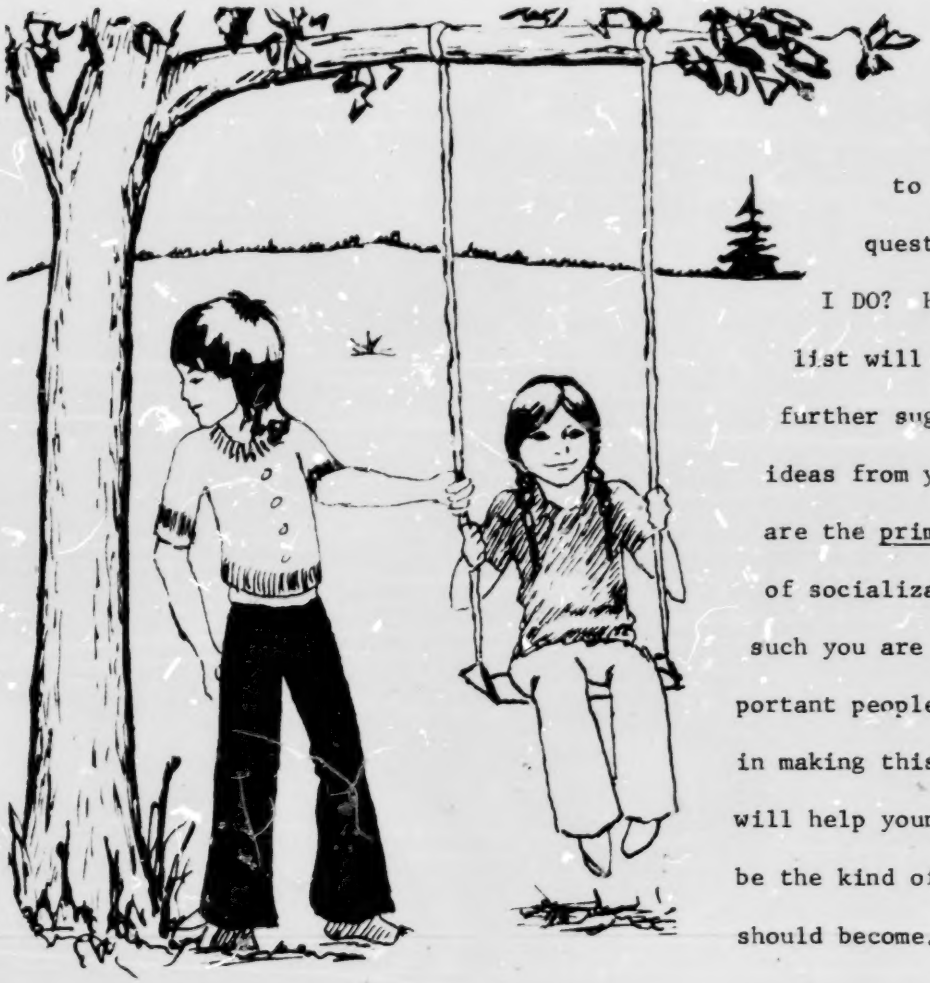
   Are most women happy?

8. Watch television to find out how many women are MC's, newscasters, sports announcers, and weather forecasters.

9. Look at a book of nursery rhymes. What do they suggest about boys and girls.

THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR DAUGHTER

What Can I Do?



This is a list of ideas and suggestions to answer the question, WHAT CAN I DO? Hopefully, this list will grow with further suggestions and ideas from you. Parents are the primary source of socialization. As such you are very important people. Your help in making this list grow will help young women to be the kind of women they should become.

1. Since all patterns of behavior are learned, we can assume children must learn to study. How can we help to accomplish this? Emphasize study as being a preparation time for a career. Tell children that everyone has tasks throughout life and that, at present, studying is their task. If they have to study at home, try to keep things quiet, without too many distractions, so that studying will be as painless as possible. If possible, provide a place for study.

   What other ideas do you have?

2. Teach girls to be independent. One way might be to give them chores

that must be done before they have free time.

3. If your daughter comes to you and says, "What will I be when I grow up?" Your answer might be, "Well, maybe, you'll be a doctor, teacher, dancer, lawyer, nurse, wife, or a singer." This answer suggests choices.
4. What if your daughter says, "I don't like school, and it won't do me any good, because I am going to get married anyhow"? What would you answer? Some suggestions are: "What if you can't find your dream man?" or "When you graduate from school, what are you going to do until you do get married?" or "Maybe you will have to work to help buy such things as furniture, a stereo, a car, or maybe a home" or "Do you know that many girls work after they get married?" What would <u>you</u> suggest as an answer to this statement?
5. When any opportunity arises, stress the need of education for girls.
6. If girls come to you with questions about careers that you can't answer, suggest that they go to their school counselor or home-school coordinator. Remember at a later date to ask what they found out.
7. Encourage girls to take an interest in competitive games and sports.
8. Help your daughter learn to appreciate her physical characteristics. Very few girls fit the stereotype of

a beautiful woman. If your daughter is tall, help her be proud of her tallness. If your daughter is overweight, help her with a diet, but also help her develop pride in her nice hair or other physical characteristics.

9. Show an interest in your child's education. You can do this by a visit to the school or by a visit with her teacher. When you have time, attend a school board meeting or an education committee meeting. Attend conferences that are arranged by the school.
10. It does great things for a girl's self confidence if she is able to do something particularly well. For example, she might be good at math or at basketball or whatever. Give her recognition and praise for what she does well.
11. Encourage your daughter to pursue excellence. Let her know that she should do the best possible in whatever she chooses.
12. Try not to be too busy to listen to your children when they want to talk about school.
13. Remember the self-fulfilling prophecy, that people usually do what is expected of them. Let your daughter

know that you expect her to do well.

14. Encourage girls to attend any workshop or conference where they ca. learn about educational opportunities, careers, and jobs. This will help them make choices.

15. Encourage girls to read and use libraries. Sometimes, give a book as a gift instead of a toy. You might give a chemistry set, doctor's kit, or a truck as a gift.

16. If your daughter asks about various kinds of work or different types of higher education, encourage her to visit with those in your community who have had such experiences.

17. Teach girls responsibility. This might be accomplished by chores. Maybe the chore could be something that is usually thought of as boys' work, such as outside yard work.

18. When appropriate, let children make choices.

19. You might suggest to people in your community who work with youth that they show movies and slide series of people in various careers. You could suggest they have speakers such as a doctor, home economist, lawyer, or teacher to speak about their careers.

Every person is born with talents and abilities. But it is only with encouragement and education that such talents and abilities can be developed to the extent that they can be used. If talents and abilities are not developed, they are lost, and both the person and society suffer the loss.

THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR DAUGHTER

1. Ask your daughter to pretend she is a boy. Have her describe her life when she is grown up. Could it be the same as a girl's life? Discuss with her why boys and girls can grow up to have similar lives such as being parents, being a marriage partner, or having interesting jobs.

2. Ask your daughter to tell you about some of the heroines or great women she has studied about in school. Share some stories.

3. You might enjoy doing the activity "What Makes Me Me" with your daughter. The activity is on page 7 of "Growing Up" Book I, page 9 of Book II, and page 10 of Book III. The activity is a way of helping a girl understand that there are some characteristics which make her special.

4. With your older teenage daughter you might like to complete and discuss the activity "What Do You Think" which is on page 7 of "Growing Up" Book III, and "How Do Women Rate As Workers" which is on page 8 of Book III.